Who accesses secondary schooling in Uganda; Was the Universal Secondary Education policy ubiquitously effective?

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Abstract

This paper explores the predictors of accessing secondary schooling for children of secondary school age, almost one decade after the introduction of universal secondary education. This is done for i) rural Uganda ii) Kampala and iii) the rest of urban areas in the wake of increasing urbanization of the rural areas that assumes urban homogeneity in otherwise heterogeneous situations. I use the Uganda census cross-sectional data for 2014 and the logit model to predict the probability of enrolling at secondary given individual, household and community level variables. I find out that only 22% of children aged 13-18 were enrolled at secondary and that both demand and supply related predictors of accessing secondary may vary by place of residence. The policy implication here is that while more effort is needed to boost access to secondary, area specific strategies are needed to respond to specific challenges by place of residence.

Introduction

The role of education in the emancipation of the human race is no longer a matter of debate. In the more recent past in Uganda, education is appreciated as one of the drivers towards harnessing the demographic dividend (NPC, 2018) more so if it is accessed by the majority. Indeed, a closer look at the myriad of advantages associated with quality mass education presupposes that it is enjoyed by all as espoused in Education for All Goal 2, Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 and more recently, sustainable development goal 4. Uganda is one of the first countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to introduce Universal Primary Education in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education in 2007. Indeed the main emphasis of the 2004-2015 Education Sector Strategic Plan was not only to improve access to quality education at primary but also ensure access to post primary education and progress through the school system (MoES, 2004). This paper is novel as it i) uses census data that is more comprehensive in coverage ii) tackles access to secondary education in a holistic manner unlike some authors who have equated it to transition and iii) investigates correlate of access for; rural Uganda, Kampala (the capital) and other urban areas. Point iii is important as Uganda has recently been characterised by creation of municipalities and town councils for political reasons even when conditions of living are not necessarily better in the new rural cum urban settings, now defined as urban. This has brought about a lot of heterogeneities in the urban areas that lumping them together would not yield robust and relevant findings.

Objectives; the main objective of this study is to isolate the predictors of accessing secondary schooling for the children of secondary school age in Uganda.

Specific objectives

i.   To explore the effect of individual level factors on the probability of accessing secondary schooling.
ii. To document the effect of factors linked to the household head on the probability of accessing secondary schooling.
iii. To investigate the effect of household characteristics on the probability of accessing secondary schooling.
iv. To study the effect of education supply related factors on the probability of accessing secondary schooling.
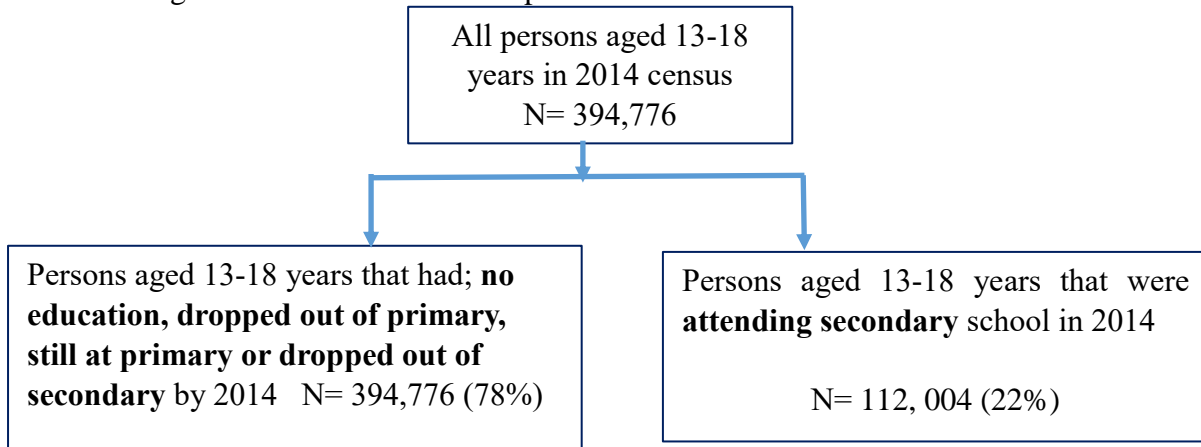v.   To isolate the factors that are most associated with accessing secondary schooling by place of residence

Methodology : For this paper I mainly used Census Data for 2014 where information had been collected on the schooling status of household members aged 3 and above and several other individual, household and community level factors that have been hypothesised and documented to influence schooling outcomes (CEPED, UEPA, & UNESCO, 1999; Pilon, 1995; UIS, UAPS, UNICEF, Ed Data, & USAID, 2004; Wayack-Pambè & Pilon, 2011). In this paper, I delimit the study to the population of children aged 13-18 years, which corresponds to the official ages for secondary schooling in Uganda. The hypothesised predictors of access to secondary are in Table 1

Table 1 : Hypothesised determinants of access to secondary school

Child Level factors	Household Level factors	Community Level factors
Age	Education of the head	Place of residence
Sex	Age of head	Distance to nearest public primary school
Orphan hood status	Sex of head	Distance to nearest private primary school
Disability Status	Marital status of head	Distance to nearest public secondary school
Relationship to head	Religion of head	Distance to nearest private secondary school
	Remittances	
	Wealth index of household	
	Proportion of under-fives	
	Household size	
	Main source of livelihood	

While I categorised some of the variables in line with what other authors have done before, I also standardised variables related to distance to have more robust results as has been recommended (Bringé & Golaz, 2017). The dependent variable is access to secondary education and here I considered the probability that all children aged 13-18 were enrolled at secondary at census time in 2014 but of course edited out some few that had completed the desired level at that age. The dependent variable was derived as illustrated in figure 1.

2

Figure 1: Derivation of the dependent variable

	All persons aged 13-18 years in 2014 census N= 394,776	
Persons aged 13-18 years that had; **no education, dropped out of primary, still at primary or dropped out of secondary** by 2014 N= 394,776 (78%)		Persons aged 13-18 years that were **attending secondary** school in 2014 N= 112, 004 (22%)

Source: Constructed using Census Data

Since the dependent variable is binary, I use the logit model as recommended (Bressoux, 2010). But because of the hierarchical nature of education related data (Bringé & Golaz, 2017), I attempted to use the multilevel model but realised that the variance due to the contextual variable constituted 6% of the total variance hence justifying that the multilevel model was not necessary. Preliminary results are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Preliminary multivariate Results on predictors of access to secondary by residence

	RURAL UGANDA		KAMPALA		OTHER URBAN
	Category affected		Category affected		Category affected
Sex of Child	++	Males	++	Males	++ Males
Age of Child	++	Younger	++	Younger	++ Younger
Relationship to head	++	Not a biological child	++	Non relative	ns
Disability status	++	Disabled		ns	++ Disabled
Orphan hood status	++	Orphaned	++	Orphaned	++ Orphaned
Education of head	++	Under less educated heads	++	Under less educated heads	++ Under less educated heads
Sex of head	++	Under male heads	++	Under male heads	++ Under male heads
Religion of head	++	Under Catholic heads		ns	++ Under Catholic heads
Marital status	++	Under widowed /divorced heads		Under widowed /divorced heads	++ Under widowed/ divorced heads
Household size	++	Under smaller households	++	Under smaller households	++ Under smaller households
Under-fives	++	Under roofs with more under-fives	++	Under roofs with more under-fives	++ Under roofs with more under-fives
Remittances	+	Under roofs that received		ns	++ Under roofs that received
Wealth	++	Under poorer heads	++	Under heads below the top 20% quintile	++ Under poorer heads

Livelihoods	++	Under heads in subsistence farming	ns		++	Under heads in subsistence farming
Distance to public primary school		ns	ns		++	Located further from school
Distance to public Secondary school	++	Located further from school	ns		++	Located further from school
Distance to private primary school	++	Located further from school	ns			ns
Distance to private primary school	++	Located further from school	ns		++	Located further from school

i) ns= not significant, ii) ++ = highly significant iii) rows in yellow show variations across categories

As already mentioned, access to secondary is not an event but a process and to predict it as if it were access to primary is to miss the point. Since somebody may have failed to access secondary because of failure to access primary but more so due to dropouts at primary, I bring factors related to primary schooling like distance to primary school as these could be some of the factors explaining failure to access secondary and discuss access to secondary in a holistic manner delving into many other factors, that impede, especially completion of primary school. A quick perusal of table 2, brings to the fore the fact that predictors of accessing secondary may vary by place of residence. Indeed, while disability status, relationship to the household head and religion are a factor in some of the areas, they are not in others as can be seen. Besides, distance related variables are a key factor in rural Uganda, other urban areas and not in Kampala. This implies that efforts to redress imbalances in access to secondary schooling in Uganda should target specific areas given the specific category of the excluded children and the differentiated effects of distance to the various types of school on access to secondary, lest we miss out on the much needed advantages of sustained education to harness the demographic dividend.

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